NUMB. XV.

The SPECTATOR.

Parva leves capiunt animos —— Ovid.

Saturday, March 17. 1711.

WHEN I was in *France*, I uſed to gaze with great Aſtoniſhment at the Splendid Equipages, and Party-coloured Habits, of that Fantaſtick Nation. I was one Day in particular contemplating a Lady, that ſate in a Coach adorned with gilded *Cupids*, and finely painted with the Loves of *Venus* and *Adonis*. The Coach was drawn by ſix milk-white Horſes, and loaden behind with the ſame Number of powder'd Foot-men. Juſt before the Lady were a Couple of beautiful Pages, that were ſtuck among the Harneſs, and by their gay Dreſſes, and ſmiling Features, looked like the elder Brothers of the little Boys that were carved and painted in every Corner of the Coach.

The Lady was the unfortunate *Cleanthe*, who afterwards gave an Occaſion to a pretty melancholy Novel. She had, for ſeveral Years, received the Addreſſes of a Gentleman, whom, after a long and intimate Acquaintance ſhe forſook, upon the Account of this ſhining Equipage, which had been offered to her by one of Great Riches, but a Crazy Conſtitution. The Circumſtances in which I ſaw her, were, it ſeems, the Diſguiſes only of a broken Heart, and a kind of Pageantry to cover Diſtreſs; for in two Months after ſhe was carried to her Grave with the ſame Pomp and Magnificence: being ſent thither partly by the Loſs of one Lover, and partly by the Poſſeſſion of another.

I have often reflected with my ſelf on this unaccountable Humour in Woman-kind, of being ſmitten with every thing that is ſhowy and ſuperficial; and on the numberleſs Evils that befall the Sex, from this light, fantaſtical Diſpoſition. I my ſelf remember a young Lady, that was very warmly ſollicited by a Couple of importunate Rivals, who for ſeveral Months together did all they could to recommend themſelves, by Complacency of Behaviour, and Agreeableneſs of Converſation. At length, when the Competition was doubtful, and the Lady undetermined in her Choice, one of the young Lovers very luckily bethought himſelf of adding a ſupernumerary Lace to his Liveries, which had ſo good an Effect that he married her the very Week after.

The uſual Converſation of ordinary Women very much cheriſhes this Natural Weakneſs of being taken with Outſide and Appearance. Talk of a new-married Couple, and you immediately hear whether they keep their Coach and ſix, or eat in Plate: Mention the Name of an abſent Lady, and it is ten to one but you learn ſomething of her Gown and Petticoat. A Ball is a great Help to Diſcourſe, and a Birth-Day furniſhes Converſation for a Twelve-month after. A Furbelow of precious Stones, an Hat buttoned with a Diamond, a Brocade Waiſtcoat or Petticoat, are ſtanding Topicks. In ſhort, they conſider only the Drapery of the Species, and never caſt away a Thought on thoſe Ornaments of the Mind, that make Perſons Illuſtrious in themſelves, and Uſeful to others. When Women are thus perpetually dazling one anothers Imaginations, and filling their Heads with nothing but Colours, it is no Wonder that they are more attentive to the ſuperficial Parts of Life, than the ſolid and ſubſtantial Bleſſings of it. A Girl, who has been trained up in this kind of Converſation, is in danger of every Embroidered Coat that comes in her Way. A Pair of fringed Gloves may be her Ruin. In a word, Lace and Ribbons, Silver and Gold Galloons, with the like glittering Gew-Gaws, are ſo many Lures to Women of weak Minds or low Educations, and, when artificially diſplayed, are able to fetch down the moſt airy Coquet from the wildeſt of her Flights and Rambles.

True Happineſs is of a retired Nature, and an Enemy to Pomp and Noiſe; it ariſes, in the firſt place, from the Enjoyment of ones ſelf; and, in the next,

next, from the Friendſhip and Converſation of a few ſelect Companions. It loves Shade and Solitude, and naturally haunts Groves and Fountains, Fields and Meadows: In ſhort, it feels every thing it wants within it ſelf, and receives no Addition from Multitudes of Witneſſes and Spectators. On the contrary, falſe Happineſs loves to be in a Crowd, and to draw the Eyes of the World upon her. She does not receive any Satisfaction from the Applauſes which ſhe gives her ſelf, but from the Admiration which ſhe raiſes in others. She flouriſhes in Courts and Palaces, Theatres and Aſſemblies, and has no Exiſtence but when ſhe is looked upon.

Aurelia, tho' a Woman of Great Quality, delights in the Privacy of a Country Life, and paſſes away a great part of her Time in her own Walks and Gardens. Her Husband, who is her Boſom Friend, and Companion in her Solitudes, has been in Love with her ever ſince he knew her. They both abound with good Senſe, conſummate Virtue, and a mutual Eſteem; and are a perpetual Entertainment to one another. Their Family is under ſo regular an Oeconomy, in its Hours of Devotion and Repaſt, Employment and Diverſion, that it looks like a little Common-Wealth within it ſelf. They often go into Company, that they may return with the greater Delight to one another; and ſometimes live in Town not to enjoy it ſo properly as to grow weary of it, that they may renew in themſelves the Reliſh of a Country Life. By this means they are Happy in each other, beloved by their Children, adored by their Servants, and are become the Envy, or rather the Delight, of all that know them.

How different to this is the Life of *Fulvia*! ſhe conſiders her Husband as her Steward, and looks upon Diſcretion, and good Houſe-Wifery, as little domeſtick Virtues, unbecoming a Woman of Quality. She thinks Life loſt in her own Family, and fancies her ſelf out of the World when ſhe is not in the Ring, the Play-Houſe, or the Drawing-Room: She lives in a perpetual Motion of Body, and Reſtleſneſs of Thought, and is never eaſie in any one Place when ſhe thinks there is more Company in another. The miſſing of an Opera the firſt Night, would be more afflicting to her than the Death of a Child. She pities all the valuable Part of her own Sex, and calls every Woman of a prudent modeſt retired Life, a poor-ſpirited, unpoliſhed Creature. What a Mortification would it be to *Fulvia*, if ſhe knew that her ſetting her ſelf to View is but expoſing her ſelf, and that ſhe grows Contemptible by being Conſpicuous.

I cannot conclude my Paper, without obſerving that *Virgil* has very finely touched upon this Female Paſſion for Dreſs and Show, in the Character of *Camilla*; who, tho' ſhe ſeems to have ſhaken off all the other Weakneſſes of her Sex, is ſtill deſcribed as a Woman in this Particular. The Poet tells us, that after having made a great Slaughter of the Enemy, ſhe unfortunately caſt her Eye on a *Trojan* that wore an embroidered Tunick, a beautiful Coat of Mail, with a Mantle of the fineſt Purple. *A Golden Bow*, ſays he, *hung upon his Shoulder; his Garment was buckled with a Golden Claſp, and his Head covered with an Helmet of the ſame ſhining Mettle.* The *Amazon* immediately ſingled out this well-dreſſed Warrior, being ſeized with a Woman's Longing for the pretty Trappings that he was adorned with:

——Totumque incauta per agmen
Fœmineo prædæ & ſpoliorum ardebat amore.

This heedleſs Purſuit after theſe glittering Trifles, the Poet (by a nice concealed Moral) repreſents to have been the Deſtruction of his Female Hero.

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